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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the preliminary research, developmental process, pilot program, and midpoint evaluation of the restructured Educational Leadership Academy for entry-level school administrators and other school leaders at Pepperdine University. Twenty years ago, Los Angeles Unified School District and Pepperdine University established the first joint university/school district leadership academy for the development of entry-level school administrators in California. Over time, approximately 40 percent of the graduates have been members of ethnic minorities and 80 percent have been women. The academy's mission is to prepare leaders who are capable of and committed to creating and leading schools that work for all members of a diverse society. The pilot program (1994-95) is based on assumptions that: (1) exemplary practice, theory, and research are related; (2) quality, an outcome-driven systems approach, and sound personal values are essential to understanding leadership; and (3) a technological approach is essential for educational leadership. Teaching strategies include team teaching, cooperative learning, peer and self assessment, case studies, and individualized learning. (Contains 10 references.) (LMI)

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PREPARING ADMINISTRATORS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF
A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

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RESTRUCTURING ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION

PREPARING ADMINISTRATORS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

Purpose

This paper describes the preliminary research, developmental process, pilot program and mid-point evaluation of the restructured Educational Leadership Academy for entry level school administrators and other school leaders at Pepperdine University. The sections on preliminary research and the developmental process are emphasized because of their perceived importance to professors of educational administration. The inaugural cohort of students began in September 1994 and completed the program in July 1995.

Background

Twenty years ago Los Angeles Unified School District (L.A.U.S.D.), Pepperdine University established the first joint university/school district leadership academy for the development of entry level school administrators in California. Over the history of that program, approximately 40% of the graduates of the program have been members of ethnic minorities and 80% have been women. A significant number of the graduates of this program hold a variety of administrative positions in L.A.U.S.D. and other school districts.

While Southern California has long enjoyed a culturally rich and ethnically diverse populace, in recent years this diversity has exploded into a tapestry representing the entire global community. Two-thirds of the world's immigrants currently come to America and almost half of those new arrivals make their way to California. Approximately 20 percent of the people living in California were born in a foreign country. Today, more than 100 different ethnic groups live in Los Angeles and more than 85 languages are spoken in Los Angeles schools (Hodgkinson, 1986). Such diversity poses a special challenge for prospective educational leaders in the post-modern period.

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In addition to the ever changing multicultural population, this is a time of complicated demands for school leaders across the nation. The challenges of the Los Angeles global community and our complex and turbulent times led the program committee for administrative preparation at the Graduate School for Education and Psychology to undertake a complete restructuring of our Leadership Academy. The specific mission developed for the new Academy is: to prepare leaders who are capable of and committed to creating and leading schools that work for everyone in our diverse society. We envision these leaders to be persons who have a positive vision of the future, the character and courage to collaborate with others to shape that vision, and the skills and competencies to make certain their actions today lead to tomorrow's best practices.

At the Graduate School, responsibility for maintenance and development of each program rests with faculty committees. The Leadership Academy committee consists of three tenure track faculty, one full time non tenure track faculty, one visiting professor/consultant, the Associate Dean for Education, and the staff program coordinator. Participation is open to all full-time and adjunct faculty. Currently, two adjunct faculty and a tenured faculty member who are not regular members of the committee participate frequently.

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Recognition of the Need

A number of events coincided to prompt the committee to undertake a major program revision. The first of these was the retirement of Arthur Adams who had served for many years as the program director and had been the moving force behind the initial development of the academy. Professor Adams had developed an extensive background of relationships within the District. These persons were his contemporaries and by the end of his tenure they too had retired.

Second, the climate in the District was changing. There were efforts to restructure this highly centralized district into a district more aligned with the movement toward site based management and the reform movement in California built upon State Department of Education documents: It's Elementary (1992), Caught in the Middle (1987), Second To None (1992). Also, local stakeholders in Los Angeles created a community based reform effort entitled the Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now or LEARN. LEARN researched and developed a series of documents on reform for L.A.U.S.D. (1993, November).

A third event we interpreted as a call for redesigning our program came from student exit interviews. As we listened and questioned our students, we grew increasingly concerned. The theoretical base that we felt was essential for them to know in order to be effective in today's schools was insufficiently present in their conversations as they spoke about the actions they were taking in the schools. Instead, they spoke about taking actions without expressing a deep understanding of the underlying vision those actions were taken to further and they spoke of their field work in terms we interpreted to reflect maintenance activities rather than leadership activities designed to create a powerful and effective learning environment. In addition, students were not frequently speaking of insights that indicated they were making strong connections across courses in our curriculum.

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A fourth event that prompted our decision was the hiring of a significant number of new adjuncts, three new full time faculty and a visiting professor. New faculty brought new perspectives.

Other influences on our initial decision were the changing culture in other school districts we serve; the increased importance of technology in educational administration, instruction, and leadership; the impact of tougher economic times on the enrollment in masters programs; changing expectations in both the student and teacher populations in the public schools; and the appearance on the horizon of new program requirements from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (1994;1994, August).

While we were aware of the impending changes in the program requirements from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, we consciously choose not to explore them early on in our process. Instead we started with a serious inquiry into our own beliefs and values, and conducted our own research into the knowledge base for the teaching of educational administration.

Developmental Process

Early in our revision we decided the committee's process should mirror the process that we were teaching students to use in site-based management. As a result, we decided to operate from consensus. For us consensus includes all persons present at a meeting including our staff program coordinator and any adjunct faculty or additional full-time faculty in attendance. If there has been a key to our successful collaboration in the program redevelopment process, it has been this practice.

Learning to operate though consensus has not happened without effort. The difficulty has been balancing the need to move forward with the need to be certain all parties have felt their opinions have been heard. At the beginning, we were often too polite, too reluctant to confront, too willing to give consent to an idea or

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concept without being committed. We did not venture from our personal comfort zones to balance inquiry and advocacy (Senge, 1994). Some were too reticent to express their views powerfully. Others were too willing to push for their views without being sufficiently concerned about the agreement of others.

Over the two years of program development we have cultivated a willingness to appreciate each other even when we disagree and to work with each other's strengths, weaknesses, and points of view. We have certainly become more authentic with each other. Being authentic, of course, occurs in the present moment and we know we must constantly struggle to maintain this core characteristic of our interactions as well as the character of the committee itself. It requires continual attention to the committee process.

Our strategies for being intentional about process are constantly evolving. A member of the program committee is responsible for attending to the process. The first two items on the printed agenda are process related. The first is a devotional conducted by a committee member to sets the context. During the second item, called process, we inquire into special needs and concerns committee members have related to the committee, the meeting, or the program which a member wants to be certain at least gets address. This usually takes five or ten minutes, but on one occasion it took an hour and a half. These needs and concerns are resolved in the meeting or we create an action plan to address the issues at a specific time in the future.

Recently, we have added a committee development component to our meetings where we share the content and processes of our courses or have a staff development experience lead by a committee member. Presently we are working with The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook (Senge, 1994). Another way we are working on our process has been getting to know each other on an informal basis. The University offers professional education programs in a number of centers and all

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committee members teach in more than one program at more than one center. Historically this has made getting to know each other difficult. We addressed this by intentionally developing our relationships. We began having lunch together. Additionally, we increased the number of informal social interaction with other faculty members in the Education Division.

Another key decision made early in our developmental process was to meet for five hours two times each month. We also agreed to commit to additional work outside of these meetings. This extended collaboration time has continued to be necessary as we move our plan from design to reality. Previously the committee met once a month or once every other month for an hour or so. Business conducted at those meetings had generally been informational and the decisions routine. Over the past two years we have evolved into a team with shared ownership and responsibility.

Part of our developmental process included involving additional stakeholders. We sought to build support for our efforts within the University. Early on we began met with the Dean and explored ideas. This was an important step. Throughout the process we have needed and received her support: money for consultants and a visiting faculty position, research materials, and travel; political support with presenting our program to the University Academic Council for approval; leadership support as we learned to work as a team; contacts with organizations outside the University; exploring strategies regarding faculty load; and collegial intellectual support. The Dean has insisted throughout our efforts that we rigorously ground our plans in the research and learn to speak about the research underlying our plans so others outside the field of educational administration within and without the University can understand them. This was new. Historically, we had tended to emphasis practitioner experiential knowledge over the reflective research knowledge-base of the field.

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We involved the faculty of the Education Division in our tentative thinking informally and formally requested their input and support. The President of the University and the Provost were involved in our process. This incorporation of the larger university community took a great deal of time but made it considerably easier to gain approval to engage in practices contrary to current policy, practices, and culture.

We sought input and participation of stakeholders from outside the University too. We developed broad principal interaction in Los Angeles County by creating a Principal's Forum. The Forum consists of approximately fifty principals from across the districts of Los Angeles County. Led by a steering committee consisting primarily of principals, the Forum meets twice yearly and explores a topic selected by the principals. Last year's theme was bilingual education. This year's theme is: The Principal's Role in Authentic Assessment. At the Forum principals work in large and small groups on their concerns and University faculty listen. We have developed a somewhat different gathering for superintendents that provides us a similar opportunity to interact.

Program development requires time. Committee members volunteered to a temporary de facto increase in their workload by being available for almost 300% more meeting time and committing to teach together without additional compensation while they were designing new courses, and modeling team teaching. The Dean and Associate Dean increased their interactions with committee members.

Preliminary Research

As one might imagine, our developmental process and preliminary research have been intertwined. Besides expanding relationships with local practitioners, we used our interactions with stakeholders to explore local needs and key issues and to

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share with our stakeholders the preliminary conclusions from our deliberations. Then we modified our conclusions as appropriate based upon their input.

Besides local research with stakeholders, we undertook many additional research strategies. Committee members attended many conferences including: AERA, CAPEA, NAPEA, and UCEA. We brought in Robert Blackburn, a past program chair from California State University, Hayward, who had recently studied educational administration in Europe, to reflect on educational administration with us. We hired Carol McGrevin, as a visiting professor to collaborate in directing our efforts. Dr. McGrevin had participated in program revisions at Texas Christian University and the University of Northern Colorado. Faculty teams visited revised programs at California State University, Fresno, and the University of Washington. The committee reviewed case studies of programs developed under funding from the Danforth Foundation (Milstein, 1993). The members visited exemplary schools and discussed with those principals what was needed for a strong administrative preparation program. The committee reviewed LEARN documents (1993, November). Members participated in elements of the LEARN training experiences, in the LEARN mentor network. We explored Principals for our changing schools: Knowledge and skill base (Thomson, 1993) and used that material to develop the initial content base. Finally, when we felt we had completed all other elements of our preliminary research we reviewed the proposed future standards for administrator preparation from the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing for 1996.

Pilot Program

As we moved into program development, we sought to create a curricular design that would provide students a chance to learn the essential elements of the knowledge base, an opportunity to transfer the meaning constructed in one course to other courses, to field work and ultimately to their day to day practices as

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administrators. We decided we had been offering too many courses and that the previous design of courses had not encouraged students to see the course as inquiries into the assumptions and best practices of school administration. To overcome this we decreased the number of courses from eight courses of three semester units each to four new courses or strands, three with six units and one with five. Three of these strands are presented over two trimesters with the final five unit strand being presented in the final trimester. We begin each academy with an introductory weekend on visioning and conclude each academy with a final weekend for revisioning and conducting exit interviews. The year-long field work practicum includes traditional management experiences and a clearly defined leadership project. A reflective seminar meeting once every three weeks provides a context for practicum coaching. Finally, each student spends six days a year in professional visits to exemplary schools, interacting with outstanding administrators, and attending professional conferences. All full-time faculty participate in field work supervision.

Below are descriptions of the introductory weekend, the four strands and the concluding weekend.

Developing a Vision for Educational Leadership is the introductory weekend seminar that introduces a strategy for developing a personal vision for educational leadership. Students analyze a variety of educational visions and develop their own preliminary vision for a school that works for everyone in our diverse society.

Understanding Self and People is an inquiry into the history of American education and its philosophical foundations, the nature of our richly diverse multicultural society, as well as the essential leadership and communication skills, attitudes, behaviors, and the knowledge-base from which these skills are derived. The strand focuses on developing self-reflection and an appreciation for the perspective and

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contribution of others. In their field work, students complete a leadership project which reflects their new understandings.

Understanding Teaching and Learning inquires into teaching and learning to enable students to lead and supervise the educational process. This strand provides opportunities to understand teaching and learning from an administrative perspective. Students facilitate the learning strategies of school age children with attention to cognition, metacognitive awareness, and performance attributions. Particular attention is given to the practice of clinical supervision skills. In addition, students learn to prepare curriculum and grant proposals.

Understanding Environments investigates the environmental forces that impact the school as an integral part of a larger society. The social, political, cultural, legal and economic issues affecting our world directly influence the planning and day to day operation of the school. The practical component of the strand uses technology as a tool for the collection, analysis and interpretation of legal, political, cultural and financial data. Finally, students reinterpret their vision in light of available resources and legal constraints.

Understanding and Transforming Organizations develops skills in the strategies for transforming educational institutions. In this strand students learn to understand schools as organizations and social systems. They explore organizations from the human resource, structural, political, and symbolic perspectives. Finally, students use these understandings to learn how to transform educational institutions.

Evaluating, Revisioning, and Planning is the concluding seminar for the program. Students reflect upon their progress as developing educational leaders and revise their personal vision for educational leadership. After participation in an exit interview where they present their leadership projects, students develop an action plan to further their educational vision in the coming year.

Concepts infused across the curriculum.

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The committee determined that certain concepts should be infused in all of the strands and field activities. These concepts are:

1. That exemplary practice, theory, and research are related.
2. That quality, an outcome driven systems approach, and sound personal values are essential to the understanding of leadership.
3. That this is the technological age and a technological approach to the processing of information is essential for educational leadership.

Teaching strategies.

In designing courses for the strands we emphasize experiential learning that generates a high level of interaction between students and faculty. There is an emphasis on collaboration and participation in the governance of the program through seminars designed for student input. Among the teaching strategies used in the program are team teaching, cooperative learning, peer and self assessment, case studies, and individualized learning assignments.

Program Evaluation

A summative evaluation for the pilot program is being conducted to gather answers to questions that we believe are important to evaluate the impact the program has had on students and faculty. Our thinking on how to proceed in gathering information was guided by Michael Patton's work in Utilization Focused Evaluation (1981) and by a conversation held with Alexander Astin, a professor at U.C.L.A. and an expert on evaluation techniques (personal communication, December 5, 1994). The evaluation focuses on six areas:

1. Personal transformation
2. Content or knowledge base
3. Skill base
4. On the job performance
5. Student beliefs and perceptions

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6. Faculty beliefs and perceptions

We are gathering data via questionnaires, course and faculty evaluation sheets, student group seminars conducted by an outside facilitator and formative evaluation seminars conducted with students by program faculty.

Summary

The process to redesign the program for the educational leadership academy has been a long, laborious, and satisfying journey and, the journey has really just begun. We continue to modify and alter our design as the context for our program continues to change. For us the most critical element in the entire process described has been the establishing of genuine working relationships with each other on the committee and with external stakeholders. The second most influential element has been the willingness of many persons to commit adequate time for the process.

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